Health and Safety Executive

THE MANAGEMENT OF HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE GB FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

CONSOLIDATED REPORT BASED ON THE 8 INSPECTIONS COMPLETED BY HSE IN 2009/10

OCTOBER 2010

PART 1

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1   This report is a summary of the main findings from the 8 inspections of Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) carried out by HSE in 2009/10. (NB we have used the acronym 'FRS' to apply both to singular and plural versions for convenience).

1.2   Additionally, the content draws on HSE's operational work with the Service and also reflects the work of the HSE Public Services Sector with key stakeholders to improve health and safety standards in the FRS and in particular the policy statement *Balancing operational and health and safety duties in the Fire and Rescue Service.* This was published by HSE in March 2010 with the endorsement of all the key stakeholders. In the statement, HSE makes it clear that it recognises the special nature of the service and accepts that, even when all reasonably practicable precautions have been taken to deal with foreseeable risks, injuries and deaths could still occur; and that it may be necessary to take some risks to secure a wider benefit to public safety.

1.3   We know that the individual reports have been shared with senior officers of those services which were not inspected and we note how the FRS has worked together to address the emerging issues. We were also pleased to see the brief report by the Fire and Rescue Adviser, Welsh Assembly Government summarising some of the findings of the inspection programme.

Inspection approach

1.4   The aim was to conduct 8 targeted health and safety management inspections of FRS within Great Britain (GB) in order to:

- obtain sufficient evidence to assess compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act (hswa). 1974 through health and safety management systems
- obtain better intelligence on selected FRS operational topics in order for HSE to better contribute to the national debate in these areas
- identify other areas of concern that will influence future HSE Public Services Sector engagement with stakeholders
- seek to ensure that FRSs are continuing to give appropriate consideration to the safety critical aspects of activities
- provide appropriate feedback to the Service.

1.5   In each inspection, 4 critical risk control topics were sampled and inspectors examined written procedures, listened to and questioned FRS staff and directly observed some work. In particular, inspectors tested the extent to which the risk controls in place truly reflected conditions on the ground, were proportionate to the risks being managed and whether or not FRS could show that their safety management activities were having the necessary impact in terms of risk reduction and control. The work was summarised in an HSE internal Minute to staff.

1.6   There were several occasions where inspectors discovered failings that were serious enough to warrant consideration of enforcement action. In each case, however, remedial steps were swiftly taken without the need for such action.

1.7   Following each inspection, the local HSE team leader wrote to the FRS (copied to TU representatives) with a summary report detailing both strengths and weaknesses and containing a list of recommendations requiring action. Each FRS was asked to reply formally and to submit a plan to confirm their response and follow up against an agreed timetable. HSE has now received plans from every FRS involved in the inspections and these will be the subject of individual attention in the coming work year during the normal course of HSE business. To date, the responses from FRS have been positive and encouraging.

1.8   In parallel with the 8 inspections, HSE has also been involved (or continues to be involved) in the investigations of serious incidents in which firefighters have died. These include:

- Bethnal Green, London
- Harrow Court, Stevenage, Hertfordshire
- Marlie Farm, Lewes, Sussex
- Atherstone, Warwickshire
- Balmoral Bar, Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders
- Shirley Towers, Southampton, Hampshire

1.9   It would not be proportionate to repeat the inspections in every FRS but starting in 2011, HSE plans to begin a short programme of visits to a further 4 FRS to assess progress against the broader recommendations set out in this report and to maintain focus on the matters raised in the High Level Statement.

1.10   This report is therefore not the final word on safety management, but a work in progress which we will update after the visits referred to above.

Findings

1.11   There are 2 specific areas where the findings across all the inspections are consistent. They confirm the fundamental importance of 2 complementary aspects of effective safety management, namely:

- competence assessment for firefighters at all levels including management
- a proportionate approach to risk assessment

1.12   These aspects are dealt with in more detail in parts 2 and 3.

1.13   There are some important contextual lessons for future HSE interventions with FRS as well:

- We are led to believe that due to a decrease in the occurrence of serious large fires that firefighters have less direct exposure to the risks they create; nevertheless, this remains the most common setting for firefighter deaths

- The extent to which FRS can create realistic and effective training opportunities to compensate for the comparative shortage of 'live' exposure is extremely important
- The topics covered during the inspections have a common link to effective control and management of risks on the incident ground.

1.14   HSE will take the findings from this report and the follow up work to fine-tune the agenda for future inspections.

Other matters

1.15   Some other matters that need to be further considered and addressed by the FRS as a whole also emerged. These are:

- The extent to which firefighters should or should not take risks to save property
- Whether retained duty staff can fulfil all of the operational duties of a firefighter given the time they have available for training
- Clarity about how FRS can meet public expectations on water rescue
- How best to develop and implement consistent national guidance and improve interoperability on those matters that affect every FRS

1.16   These are all areas where HSE recognises the importance of maintaining a productive and continuing dialogue with FRS employers and employee representatives both at national and individual FRS level.

Structure

1.17   The report is set out as follows:

- Part 1 Introduction
- Part 2 Overview of safety management system findings
- Part 3 Operational topics
- Part 4 Reasonable expectations
- Part 5 Summary of recommendations

PART 2

OVERVIEW OF MANAGEMENT FINDINGS

This overview follows the HSG65 'Successful health and safety management' publication headings used in each report.

2.1   POLICY

2.1.1   All the FRS are sizeable organisations in their own right, they employ large numbers of staff and ought to have well-established management arrangements for controlling the operational risks to their staff.

2.1.2   It quickly became clear to inspectors during preparation for the visits that some FRS had put significant pre-emptive and worthwhile effort into reviewing and updating their procedures covering the target areas. This might not otherwise have taken place with the same urgency. We would expect this report to provoke an equivalent level of proportional challenge and review which HSE will be able to track in future senior-level discussions.

2.1.3   The most common policy theme was the dispersed and sometimes complex, basis on which different FRS organised their core framework policies for safety-critical activity. This is not a bureaucratic fixation but is based on inspectors' observations of the difficulty that operational staff had putting their hands on a relevant piece of guidance or instruction. In some cases important records that inspectors would have expected to find did not exist. In one service, it was clear that a policy was not effective as it was not being implemented by firefighters who believed that it did not meet public expectations.

2.1.4   This is not unusual compared with what HSE inspectors routinely find with other large employers. The operational context of the FRS coupled with the ease of read-across ought, in our view, to make it less prevalent, however, because of the opportunities for cooperation.

2.2   ORGANISATION

There are 4 separate elements under this heading.

Control

2.2.1   FRS roles and responsibilities are supported by a formal command structure. It would have been a surprise if any of the FRS sampled had not been able to demonstrate that they had an effective management framework.

2.2.2   8 separate inspections gave HSE a valuable insight into the extent to which a modern FRS commits its thinking, procedures and expectations to paper. The general observation that every FRS could significantly reduce its paperwork burden may look self-evident but warrants emphasis for 2 key reasons.

2.2.3   First, when inspectors drilled down into the critical risk control arrangements, they did not always find clarity. There were occasions where in response to an HSE

enquiry about risk control, a further piece of paper emerged, or occasionally was hastily written from new as if the paperwork itself provided the solution.

2.2.4   Second, in every FRS, there was a welcome commitment to review (ie to significantly prune and sharpen) the current paperwork – one of the principles of sensible health and safety that HSE aims to promote. Paper-heavy management is not unique to FRS but the basic test of the paperwork during the inspections was to assess whether, in the inspector's opinion, each FRS had:

- Identified and documented the highest priority risks for attention (the risk profile)
- Designed and implemented effective controls and demonstrated that they were working
- Monitored performance at the appropriate level and frequency within the organisation and shown that they had taken action as a result.

2.2.5   We found a range of approaches that had been independently developed in each FRS but which included some common management packages, such as those used for training records. We were surprised to see less commonality and evidence of cross-FRS learning than we expected. We return to this issue and also comment on the choice of performance indicators below.

Competence

2.2.6   The arrangements for planning, delivering and monitoring the effectiveness of training in core topics received close attention in every inspection. This is where inspectors found the greatest variation in performance.

2.2.7   HSE understands the imperative in each FRS to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and then to allocate appropriate resources in terms of protection, prevention and operational response. Against this background, FRS have to demonstrate that firefighters follow safe systems of work and appropriate control measures with the right equipment, competence and training to enable them to do so. We therefore looked at how the arrangements for securing competence were implemented and monitored as accurate indicators of effective risk management.

2.2.8   The choice of the core risk control arrangements mirrored this importance. We chose to look at competence in Incident Command because this was the supervisory context in which individual firefighter competence in BA and CFB would arise. (For completeness, we chose to look at Risk Information as a topic because this informs Incident Command). Our inspections confirmed that there were gaps in consistency of training provision and issues about the currency of some items of central guidance. This was most apparent in relation to BA refresher training. HSE regards agreed FRS guidance as the benchmark minimum, though individual FRS are free to choose how they achieve the end result. The FRS as a whole would benefit from clarification on the purpose and conduct of BA refresher training and how it complements the Integrated Personal Development System.

2.2.9   The most evident differences related to:

- The use of Training Needs Analysis to confirm which firefighters needed training and when

- Situations where firefighters had not used their skills during a set period and needed to be refreshed or re-tested
- The ease with which FRS could confirm that full time and retained staff required to carry out the same duties had received the same training
- The problems associated with the availability and rostering of RDS staff onto essential training courses
- The ways FRS dealt with staff who had failed to demonstrate competence
- Record keeping of training provision

2.2.10 The inspections looked at how FRS selected and accredited instructors. There were differences in the ways that:

- Individuals were selected and assigned to training roles
- Instructors were routinely assessed on their competence to train

2.2.11 These may not be issues if the outcome is effectively achieved (ie that staff are adequately trained and competent to perform their roles). In our view, the issue of competence is the biggest single operational safety challenge presently facing the FRS. We do not underestimate the difficulties this can cause with a workforce comprising full time and retained staff, nor the fact that any changes might impact disproportionately on rural and more dispersed FRS. But we do consider that this is such an important indicator of risk control that it should be further developed as an important leading indicator of HS performance - see below.

Cooperation

2.2.12 The terms of reference for the various safety committees in each FRS were not always clear, sometimes leaving members vague as to their purpose. In all cases, however, there was appropriate senior manager leadership. There was not always joined-up engagement from TU side. There was also some anxiety that HSE inspectors spoke separately to TU representatives, though this is an internal HSE operational requirement and not an indication of preferential treatment as it was sometimes interpreted.

2.2.13 We observed better relationships between the employer and employees in some FRS than others but we make no further comment on this issue here except to emphasise the importance of good consultation in pursuit of good safety management.

Communication

2.2.14 We made a strong point at the outset about paperwork but this is not unique to the FRS. Rather, it reiterates the challenge faced by any large organisation on how best to communicate with large numbers of staff at geographically dispersed locations. However, this burden can be eased considerably if the original source material is itself succinct, targeted and well written – a point we return to below.

2.3 PLANNING

2.3.1 Inspectors looked at a set of key risk control systems chosen because of their critical contribution to protecting firefighters. In each case we looked for evidence of a

proportionate set of control measures. So far, the general conclusions all relate to the provision of training and have been confirmed under the section entitled 'Competence' above. There is a separate set of points that relate to risk assessment that fall under this heading.

2.3.2   Risk assessment is a means to an end, not the end in itself. It should confirm what serious risks are in scope, clearly identify the standard of control to be achieved and set the standards to be monitored and reviewed.

2.3.3   The inspections revealed a wide variety of approaches to planning and monitoring from which we concluded, for example, that:

- There is scope for FRS to manage health and safety using fewer better indicators
- The greatest scope for improvement lies in the area of competence

2.3.4   Our inspections also suggested that FRS are not always using their internal HS advisors to best effect, especially in devising better Performance Indicators. The effectiveness of monitoring can be traced directly to the quality of the risk assessment that underpins it. This is an area where we want to work with and to develop better options with FRS.

2.4   MONITORING

2.4.1   Leading indicators are a more effective management tool for monitoring performance than lagging ones, especially for HS. A leading indicator requires a routine systematic check that key actions or activities are undertaken as intended – such as regular confirmation that competence-based training is being completed to time and to standard. A lagging indicator, on the other hand, is a reactive measure of weakness, such as incident data. A lagging indicator shows when an important safety outcome has failed, or not been achieved.

2.4.2   We recommend that FRS should concentrate their management scrutiny and oversight on topics that most matter for firefighter safety in the following areas:

- Demonstration of operational competence through completion of core training and assessment
- Post-incident review and analysis to inform training needs

2.4.3   We would expect FRS to see benefits in demonstrating more consistently that:

- Training was being provided on the basis of accurate training needs analysis
- Additional competence gaps were being identified consistently
- There was an accurate baseline for monitoring implementation of the training plan
- There was compliance with relevant standards and guidance.

2.5   AUDIT

2.5.1   Although some FRS attempt to benchmark their performance against others, this was not as well developed as we would have expected. Furthermore, FRS do not always make full use of their internal health and safety management system expertise to provide an intelligent internal challenge function. This would pay particular dividends in enabling FRS to develop smarter sets of HS-related performance indicators. There are external courses available that would meet present needs.

2.5.2   To reiterate the comments made above, in every FRS there would be much to be gained from a serious attempt to reduce the volume of paperwork currently generated on HS matters and to focus effort on a smaller number of core performance indicators.

2.6   REVIEW

2.6.1   Those FRS who were involved in this programme of interventions have now all embarked on their own improvement plans. FRS who were not involved ought, however, to consider using this the findings in this consolidated report as a trigger for their own self-analysis.

PART 3

OPERATIONAL TOPICS - FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1   Breathing apparatus (BA) and compartment fire behaviour (CFB) training

3.1.1   All services had procedures for training and assessment in BA and CFB training although each had a different approach. Firefighters were, in most cases, positive about BA and CFB training that they received. In some cases the monitoring of BA wearers' competence was less than adequate. Some services had recently reviewed and updated their procedures so they were still in the process of 'bedding in' at the time of the inspections.

3.1.2   Initial acquisition of BA and CFB skills (for both whole-time and retained firefighters) was via recruit training courses.

3.1.3   Centrally organised BA and CFB courses and assessments were conducted by BA instructors who were appropriately trained. There was however, little or no quality assurance of this training. In some services there was no evidence to demonstrate the maintenance of instructor competence. Much ongoing training also took place at station level, with varying degrees of support provided by central training teams – again with little apparent quality assurance.

3.1.4   Following the introduction of the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) and competence based training; services have developed differing arrangements to ensure that operational staff maintain competence. Not all services were able to demonstrate that their arrangements met the standards set out in current guidance.

3.1.5   All services had some form of BA and CFB refresher training although not all conformed to FSC 18/2009 'Fire-fighter safety at operational incidents' - in respect of the timing and duration of that refresher training. Some services had more structured and developed refresher training programmes to maintain competence in these topics than others.

3.1.6   All services used some sort of CFB training facility: Liquefied Petroleum Gas, carbonaceous or both. Although the risks faced by firefighters and their general training needs are similar, views about which type of training facilities offered the most appropriate training to meet the aims and objectives of current guidance varied.

3.1.7   Some services had assessed the competence of their staff and found that some firefighters were not competent and had not had either BA or CFB refresher training as required. Those not deemed competent had either been taken 'off the run' or been put on restricted duties until additional training was provided.

3.1.8   Some services provided pre-course assessment or study packs; some retained duty firefighters said that it was not always easy for them to find time to refresh their knowledge prior to assessments.

3.1.9   Deficiencies in the recording of training were common although in most cases the services had already identified this as a problem and had planned improvements.

3.1.10 In some services, firefighters reported that procedures for rapid deployment involving the use of BA were sometimes used as the norm when they otherwise ought not to have been.

Recommendations

3.1.11 All Fire and Rescue Services should:

- ensure that relevant, effective BA & CFB initial and refresher training is provided to all firefighters;
- provide effective arrangements for the training and assessment of BA entry control officers;
- have effective processes to assess competence;
- assess the quality and effectiveness of station-based training;
- assure themselves that BA and CFB instructors and those who carry out station based training maintain their competence in the use of BA and in training and assessment;
- maintain accurate records of training;
- ensure the aims and objectives of CFBT are properly identified and delivered; and
- monitor the implementation of rapid deployment procedures.

3.1.12 The production of national guidance on common minimum standards and sharing of good practice on how the training may best be delivered is recommended. This would improve interoperability as well as enable all services to ensure sufficient commonality of firefighter safety and competence for operational work.

3.2   Core Skills Training

Findings

3.2.1   All services had policies on the maintenance of operational skills although a variety of approaches were evident.

3.2.2   Some services had more developed training and assessment cycles covering a wide variety of topics (centred around national Generic Risk Assessments) but with provision for local flexibility, involving a mixture of central and local delivery. Others concentrated their training time on specific risk critical topics. Training delivery also varied with a mixture of central training, training delivery teams and on-station training.

3.2.3   In some services firefighters expressed concern that, in their view, there was insufficient time available for the maintenance of operational skills due to requirements for increased fire prevention and community work.

3.2.4   Some central training staff also expressed concerns that, in their view, there were insufficient trainers and too little time to deliver the training they believed was required.

3.2.5   In the majority of services staff commented that recording on training recording databases was onerous and time consuming. Information was not, therefore always recorded effectively. These recording systems are instrumental in determining training needs and so ensuring the input of good quality of data into them is important. In a number of services there was inadequate formal assessment of the quality of training. Some services ran training assessor days to ensure consistency of delivery.

3.2.6   In some services retained duty staff expressed concern that they had insufficient time to train and maintain their operational skills. Most indicated that the time allocated for actual training during training periods was often limited by the need to perform other tasks (including administration). Some RDS attended training sessions for 2 hours per week whilst others had 3 hours. Some services had reduced the administrative burden on RDS staff to maximise the time available, others ensured the maintenance of specialist skills with additional training outside conventional drill times. Similar concerns were expressed by some whole time staff.

Recommendations

3.2.7   Fire and rescue services should:

- ensure the training framework for the maintenance of core skills is able to equip firefighters to competently deal with all reasonably foreseeable risks at incidents
- quality assure the delivery and effectiveness of core skills training across all duty systems and roles; and
- ensure training records are complete and effective.

3.3   Incident command training

Findings

3.3.1   The majority of services had clear policies on the acquisition and maintenance of incident command skills. In some cases however, these policies had been recently reviewed and therefore some procedures, whilst improved, were still new and developing.

3.3.2   Different approaches to the acquisition and maintenance of command competence skills were evident between services. Generally it appeared that incident commanders received their initial training on a formal course, either at a training centre or at the Fire Services Colleges in England or Scotland. Whilst there may be a need for variation due to local factors, a lack of consistency between services may affect interoperability between services at multi agency and cross border incidents.

3.3.3   The majority of the services had recently completed an assessment of the competence of all incident commanders. The remaining services were undertaking or developing a programme of assessment.

3.3.4   All services had a system in place to maintain command competence and all used computer-based simulation systems and on-station training to train and refresh their incident commanders – this seemed to be well received by staff. The extent and frequency of training and re-assessment varied markedly. Some services had a proactive and systematic approach to the assessment and maintenance of incident command competencies whereas others did not have clear arrangements for continuing assessment.

3.3.5   There were differences between policies for training and assessing firefighters who either 'step up' to incident command or who are on temporary promotion. Some services did not allow staff to carry out the role of Incident Commander unless they had been formally assessed as competent in the role – many using the computer simulation training systems as part of that assessment. In other services attendance at a formal training course and assessment of competence were required. In some services procedures were less well defined and not as embedded as was expected.

3.3.6   In most services, when a re-assessment indicated safety critical failings, officers were taken off incident command until they could again demonstrate appropriate competence.

3.3.7   The extent to which Incident Commanders received support from more senior officers during operations varied as did the extent to which their command competence was monitored and whether and how feedback was given following incidents.

Recommendations

3.3.8   Services should ensure that they deliver effective training (acquisition and development) and assessment for all those who carry out incident command including those on temporary promotion or 'acting'.

3.3.9   National guidance should be provided on good practice in incident command training.

3.4   Provision of risk critical information

3.4.1   The inspection programme focused on determining whether services had systems in place to ensure that risk critical information was obtained and disseminated to front line crews in order to allow Incident Commanders to take the information into account when formulating operational plans on the incident ground.

Findings

3.4.2   Some services had clearly worked hard to improve their policies and procedures and were given positive feedback, although further development and comprehensive implementation of these procedures was still required. Others did not seem to have adequate systems to ensure the collection and dissemination of adequate risk information on relevant premises.

3.4.3   Although all services had identified risk critical sites and had systems in place to check existing risk sites, some were less adept at capturing new risks within their areas, processing and disseminating new information to the front line and then maintaining the currency of the information.   In the majority of services a need for additional training was identified. .

Recommendations

3.4.5   It is important that the risk critical information provided to an Incident Commander is accurate, timely and suitable (i.e. easily understandable and applicable to the incident). Services need to ensure that their systems to capture and maintain risk critical information are robust to allow appropriate information to be used and understood at the point of use.

3.4.6   All services should ensure that:

- they provide adequate training for staff gathering and assessing risk critical information;
- there is a system in place to actively collect relevant risk critical information;
- they monitor the effectiveness of these arrangements;
- risk critical information is kept up to date and is in a suitable format; and

- incident commanders are able to access the information to inform their command decisions.

3.4.7   The production of national guidance on the classification of risk premises and the collection and dissemination of risk information is recommended.

PART 4

REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS

This set of reasonable expectations was prepared in March 2009 and was used to brief HSE inspectors in advance of the inspections. They confirm the standards to be applied in the key topic areas. A senior fire services manager was seconded to HSE to work on this task and HSE consulted with key stakeholders before they were completed.

4.1   Breathing apparatus and compartment fire behaviour training

4.1.1   The following are the key components of a system to ensure that firefighters maintain breathing apparatus (BA) and compartment fire behaviour (CFB) skills as part of a good health and safety management system.

4.1.2   It is recognised that, with the introduction of the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) and competence based training, fire and rescue services may have differing training strategies in place to ensure operational staff can maintain competence. It will be for the service to demonstrate that their training strategies and training delivery models meet the principles set out in current guidance.

(Note – This is not simple. However, an employer needs to assure themselves that their staff have sufficient competence in safety-related issues to enable them to perform in a safe manner. The outcome is more important than the means of achieving it.)

Breathing apparatus (BA) training

4.1.3   Each service has a clear policy and arrangements for training firefighters and managers in the use of BA and its supervision, support and maintenance. The policy is supported by documentation covering the nature and role of watch-based and central training personnel and arrangements for ensuring their competence.

4.1.4   All BA wearers have had comprehensive training in the use of BA, including experience of its use in the range of adverse environments that firefighters may be exposed to, including: hot fire, smoke, a range of building sizes, chemicals and inside gas-tight suits.

4.1.5   A fully competent trainer/instructor assesses the competence of each individual firefighter – both in theory and practical application.

4.1.6   Acquisition training is provided to all firefighters during their foundation training. Whole time firefighters normally undergo this training as part of their trainee course, their competence should be assessed before they undertake fire and rescue operations. Retained duty firefighters undergo training as part of their acquisition of skills training, but may be required to respond to incidents without first having attended a BA course. No firefighter is allowed to undertake any BA related duties unless they have been trained and are competent to do so. The service has a robust system in place to take account of this, for example the use of helmet markings to

denote BA and non-BA wearers to ensure that firefighters (wholetime and RDS) do not operate outside their competencies.

4.1.7   Maintenance of skills is assured by refresher training and regular assessment of competence. The frequency and nature of refresher training depends on the operational experience of each firefighter which is monitored by competent line managers during incidents and by effective debriefing.

4.1.8   This monitoring complements formal arrangements for assessment by BA specialists such as competent trainers. These arrangements allow the service to assure itself that all firefighters, including retained duty staff, maintain their competence.

4.1.9   Managers who carry out command roles at incidents have received suitable and sufficient training, including refresher training, to ensure that they are able to monitor compliance with BA procedures at incidents.

4.1.10 Initial/refresher training and assessment is undertaken by competent BA instructors. These instructors have undergone training to fulfil the particular requirements of the role and been appropriately assessed. The maintenance of competency is regularly assessed and instructors maintain a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate competence. Such service-wide training is in addition to effective station based assessment and training which supports the maintenance of skills. On-station training sessions, led by managers and/or fully competent trainer/instructors may be part of this training, assessment and maintenance of skills process.

4.1.11 The frequency of training depends on operational use; those who regularly wear BA do not need such frequent assessment and associated refresher training as those who rarely, if ever, use the sets. Fire Service Circular 17/70 recommends that breathing apparatus wearers attend a 2-3 day refresher course at two-yearly intervals, and that any firefighter who has not worn breathing apparatus at a fire during any period of 12 months should have refresher training in heat and smoke. Since the publication of FSC 17/70, 2/71 and 8/81 there have been significant advances in the provision of BA training and the introduction of the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS). IPDS provides a framework within which the assessment of competence and training needs is carried out and, when effectively implemented, can help to ensure the maintenance of competence. However, it does not replace the need to ensure compliance with current standards set out in national guidance. The National Occupational Standards (NOS) and role maps are not complete in themselves and do not provide the totality of what should be included in any competence and training analysis.

4.1.12 The role of the Breathing Apparatus Entry Control Officer (BAECO) is essential to the safe control and support of BA operations. The skills and knowledge to carry out the BAECO role in terms of maintaining proper records on the Entry Control Board, monitoring and communicating with BA teams, and the briefing and de-briefing of BA teams, are an integral part of both BA training and refresher training.

4.1.13 Any firefighter who is going to be deployed as a Breathing Apparatus Entry Control Officer (BAECO) must be a competent BA wearer and have additional skill

training for the particular role and responsibilities – so that they may effectively assist and inform incident managers.

4.1.14 Managers who supervise BA wearers have a good understanding of BA and awareness of current procedures. Those at senior levels may not be current BA wearers but they have a full appreciation of the significance of the conditions for their crews and the consequences for their decisions. This applies whether they are deployed at the incident itself or away from the immediate incident and irrespective of their managerial position in the service.

Compartment fire behaviour training (CFBT)

4.1.15 Each service has a policy and arrangements for the safe and effective provision of CFB initial and refresher training, development and assessment. The policy sets out clear objectives and identifies the type and frequency of training required and how it is to be delivered. Volume 4 of the Fire Service Manual 'Guidance and Compliance Framework for Compartment Fire Behaviour Training' (CFBT) (published in 2000) gives guidance on how to ensure that a systematic process is undertaken in determining the type of training to be provided.

4.1.16 Services ensure that the facilities and methods they use allow the delivery of realistic training to equip firefighters to deal effectively with compartment fires and the risks they may be exposed to.

4.1.17 Trainers are competent in CFB themselves and are assessed as competent to train and assess others effectively.

4.1.18 The provision of CFBT is based on effective training needs assessment within the framework of IPDS.

4.2   Core skills

4.2.1   A comprehensive training and development strategy has been developed and implemented by the organisation. The strategy will encompass all personnel from firefighter to Brigade Manager and include all duty systems.

4.2.2   Arrangements are in place to support and complement the training and development strategy. The operational training plan describes how training will be organised, prepared, delivered and evaluated.

4.2.3   The strategy/training plan has been effectively communicated to all personnel within the organisation and is understood by personnel who have responsibilities for the development and delivery of training.

4.2.4   The planning and implementation of training and development reflects the risk profile of the area for which the service is responsible, and, where appropriate, that of neighbouring services including preparation for a national response based on the national resilience model. Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs) together with information gathered from the analysis of individual and organisational development needs influence the form, content and methodology chosen for any training/development activity.

4.2.5   Their performance management system ensures the recording of all performance management interventions to remedy individual shortcoming and informs wider action to improve competence throughout the service.

4.2.6   The service has sufficient people with the correct skills and capabilities to meet the needs of the area served. The service is able to respond to changing need by amending procedures or changing roles and has appropriate training and development arrangements to achieve this.

4.2.7   Training enables operational staff to achieve the core skills required for them to carry out their expected activities and responsibilities in a realistic, safe and effective way. It takes into account the risks that they may reasonably be expected to face on operations (including cross-border incidents). The Generic Risk Assessments (GRAs) are used as a starting point when designing training and development activities and should be incorporated into training scenarios.

4.2.8   The identification of individual training and development is based on a workplace assessment of a person's performance, including self-assessment if appropriate.

4.2.9   A systematic process for designing and delivering training to meet all identified needs (ie individual, group or corporate) is in place.

4.2.10 The delivery of training, the development of individuals/crews and the maintenance of competence takes into account roles and duty systems of individuals/crews and has been tailored to meet their needs, requirements and learning styles.

4.2.11 Those delivering the training have the appropriate skills and competence to do so.

4.2.12 Minimum training standards and frequency of training activity have been identified and clearly communicated to all relevant staff.

4.2.13 Suitable arrangements are made to provide safe realistic training to ensure that firefighters are competent.

4.2.14 Arrangements exist to evaluate training and development to ensure that it is effective and skills are maintained. The success of training arrangements in meeting their objectives should be evaluated.

4.2.15 Line managers continuously assess how well staff are maintaining their skills by monitoring performance in real situations through both observation during incidents and an effective debriefing process. On-station training sessions, led by supervisors and/or fully competent trainers/instructors may be part of this assessment and maintenance of skills process.

4.2.16 Training and development records are regularly monitored and suitable arrangements exist to ensure that all personnel are developed and remain competent within their role regardless of duty system.

4.2.17 Alternative delivery and support mechanisms, such as e-learning and modular training programmes, have been introduced to support different working patterns (this is particularly important for retained staff).

4.2.18 The training strategy, arrangements and delivery are subject to appropriate monitoring, audit and review and have been evaluated to ensure that they are suitable and sufficient to meet the needs of the organisation.

4.2.19 In order to ensure core skills are maintained, services usually have arrangements to send firefighters on training courses at local or regional training centres or the Fire Service College or equivalent or on internal courses, coordinated, organised and run by their own training and development departments. These include training in specialist skills (eg water rescue) or corporately identified skills (eg initial work at height training). Some centrally organised courses may be run on station. Services may use centrally developed DVDs for e learning.

4.2.20 On-station training may be used to cover core skills and other identified local/individual, training needs. Services have training programmes, typically two or three year rolling programmes which specify the training sessions to be covered during on-station training over the period. These programmes take into account foreseeable scenarios/tasks identified in the GRAs. Depending on the training need, this training may be knowledge, skill or realistic scenario based or a combination.

4.2.21 Services have, on the basis of their Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMP), Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) and reasonably foreseeable risks, determined the core training retained staff required to maintain their skills and how to achieve this in the time available.

4.3   Incident command

4.3.1   The fire and rescue service has a strategy, plan or procedure dealing with the provision and application of Incident Command System training. This may be part of an overall training policy or a specific ICS training policy.

4.3.2   The mobilising policy includes risk-based key control measures, such as the level of role and skill sets of the incident commander mobilised to incidents.

4.3.3   The service has conducted an analysis of its incident command requirements at all levels of the organisation and implemented an appropriate model based on its Integrated Risk Management Plan including training requirements.

4.3.4   The incident command training policy and arrangements take account of guidance contained in the Fire Service Manual on Incident Command and the national Generic Risk Assessments (GRA).

4.3.5   Before undertaking operational command incident commanders have been formally assessed and found to be competent to operate in the role they are expected to undertake.

4.3.6   Systems are in place to assess commanders and potential commanders at every level from Crew Manager to Brigade Manager. There is a supporting maintenance programme to ensure ongoing competency and a mechanism to

feedback into incident command related policies and processes if shortcomings are identified

4.3.7   The service has arrangements in place to ensure suitable and sufficient training for incident commanders in identifying and assessing risks at operational incidents. These include the appropriate measures that need to be taken to control and mitigate risk as well as the appropriate arrangements to respond to and manage unexpected events. There is clear evidence of training, development and maintenance of competency for staff who may be required to operate at Bronze, Silver and Gold Command levels including those 'acting – up and/or 'in-development'.

4.3.8   Incident commanders have a thorough knowledge of the dynamic risk assessment process and the Generic Risk Assessments and their application (the GRAs are risk assessments for foreseeable incidents and incident commanders should have an appropriate awareness of these depending on their role).

4.3.9   The service has a system that maintains these skills over time through a periodic assessment process including: the use of realistic training scenarios, computer bases simulations, tabletop exercises and multi-agency exercises dependant on their role. (Note: the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) is a framework within which the assessment of competence and training needs is carried out – it does not provide all the answers. In particular, the National Occupation Standards (NOSs) and role maps are not complete in themselves and do not cover all that should be included in any competence and training needs analysis). The assessment of individuals may present a challenge for services that have significant numbers of Retained Duty System (RDS) firefighters and/or where the service is spread over a large geographical area. This challenge is recognised. However, where the risk and hazards are the same for whole time and RDS staff, the training achieves similar outcomes. A well-structured and resourced programme is in place to deal with these issues. This may be achieved through the use of peripatetic services in addition to or in place of centralised resources.

4.3.10 Managers, who supervise incident command system, have a good understanding of current procedures and issues. At a senior level this applies whether they are deployed at the incident itself (for example as a "Bronze or Silver" level incident commander) or away from the incident (for example 'Gold') and irrespective of their managerial position in the service.

4.3.11 Training and development records for incident commanders are regularly monitored and suitable arrangements exist to ensure that they remain competent in their role regardless of duty system.

4.3.12 All firefighters have an awareness of the incident command system and an understanding of their role within it across the range of incidents that they encounter.

4.3.13 At crew level, line managers continuously assess how well staff are maintaining their competence by monitoring performance in actual situations through both observation during incidents and effective debriefing. On-station training sessions, led by supervisors and/or fully competent trainers/instructors may form part of this assessment and maintenance of skills process.

4.3.14 The service has a mechanism for monitoring managers' performance in respect of how they ensure the safe application of skills, processes and procedures.

4.3.15 The frequency of monitoring depends on risk assessment and performance management reviews, however, it is expected those managers in development are assessed more frequently than competent managers. Monitoring managers and/or teams may undertake this role.

4.3.16 Procedures are in place to ensure that all information about an incident, including the decisions made and the reasons for those decisions informs feedback/debrief processes.

4.4   Risk information

4.4.1   The service has a policy on the risk information they need to gather and how it is to be disseminated.

4.4.2   The policy is supported by arrangements that deliver:

- *Acquisition* - of risk critical information
- *Evaluation* - of the information
- *Planning and Communication* – how to present and convey the information ensuring that the appropriate people are aware of it
- *Preparing* – responding to the information by reviewing response and on-scene operational arrangements
- *Training* – to ensure firefighters are equipped to recognise & deal with the risk identified.
- *Application* – ensuring the information will be used on the incident ground.
- *Re-evaluating & Updating* – the information

4.4.3   There are criteria to determine whether a site is inspected and re-inspected under Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004, section 7(2)(d), Fire (Scotland) Act , section (9(2) (d). These include:

- risk assessments/classifications of priority and frequency
- who decides whether to inspect; and
- methods of familiarisation e.g. site visits, GRA based lectures etc.

4.4.4   The service demonstrates effective liaison with major hazard sites and through the variety of forums and partnerships, such as the Police, Building Control, Local Strategic Partnerships, Community Planning Partnerships and Strategic Coordinating Groups available, actively seeking to obtain and share risk information that contributes to firefighter safety. Where necessary there are data sharing protocols to enable the exchange of information and the development of plans.

4.4.5   Personnel engaged in risk analysis *(e.g. fire inspectors)* and/or the developments of operational plans are competent, or, if in development, provided with adequate levels of supervision.

4.4.6   Operational Crews are provided with information that is: accurate, relevant, understandable and timely.

4.4.7   There are processes for sharing information across the service, for example between Prevention (Community Fire Safety) and Protection (Fire Safety Inspectors) teams, front-line firefighters and training departments (if appropriate).   Information is also shared with neighbouring FRSs to ensure safe and effective interoperability before and during incidents.

4.4.8   Effective communication strategies are in place to ensure that the findings from the risk analysis process and the control measures put in place to control risk are conveyed to firefighters (and other operational staff) as required (e.g. through turnout messages or risk cards*). There are good plans and arrangements to pass information that becomes available during incidents to incident commanders.

4.4.9   There is a control system that ensures regular auditing, reviewing and tracking of amendments to risk information.

4.4.10 Processes and procedures are in place to allow Incident Commanders to obtain additional risk information for hazards at incidents if they need it.

4.4.11 Information from response debriefs and post incident reviews is used effectively used to inform policies and practices across the organisation.

PART 5

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

In Part 2, we confirmed our general comments about health and safety management arrangements in the FRS. This section repeats the topic-specific recommendations from Part 3 of the report.

1   All Fire and Rescue Services should:

- ensure that relevant, effective BA & CFB initial and refresher training is provided to all firefighters and officers;
- provide effective arrangements for the training and assessment of BA entry control officers;
- have effective processes to assess competence;
- assess the quality and effectiveness of station-based training;
- assure themselves that BA and CFB instructors and those who carry out station based training maintain their competence in the use of BA and in training and assessment;
- maintain accurate records of training;
- ensure the aims and objectives of CFB are properly identified and delivered; and
- monitor the implementation of rapid deployment procedures.

2   The production of national guidance on common minimum standards and sharing of good practice on how the training may best be delivered is recommended. This would improve interoperability as well as enable all services to ensure sufficient commonality of firefighter safety and competence for operational work.

3   Fire and rescue services should:

- ensure the training framework for the maintenance of core skills is able to equip firefighters to competently deal with all reasonably foreseeable risks at incidents
- quality assure the delivery and effectiveness of core skills training across all duty systems and roles; and
- ensure training records are complete and effective.

4   Services should ensure that they deliver effective training (acquisition and development) and assessment for all those who carry out incident command including those on temporary promotion or 'acting'.

5   National guidance should be provided on good practice in incident command training.

6   It is important that the risk critical information provided to an Incident Commander is accurate, timely and suitable (i.e. easily understandable and applicable to the incident).   Services need to ensure that their systems to capture and maintain risk critical information are robust to allow appropriate information to be used and understood at the point of use.

7   All services should ensure that:

- they provide adequate training for staff gathering and assessing risk critical information;

- there is a system in place to actively collect relevant risk critical information;

- they monitor the effectiveness of these arrangements;

- risk critical information is kept up to date and is in a suitable format; and

- incident commanders are able to access the information to inform their command decisions.

8   The production of national guidance on the classification of risk premises and the collection and dissemination of risk information is recommended.